



Guidance for Schools Submitting Absentee Data to VDH

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Purpose

This document provides guidance for school divisions (or individual schools) to participate in the submission of aggregate student absenteeism data to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). This guide outlines the requested data elements, file naming conventions, and means of compiling and submitting absenteeism data to VDH.

Routine monitoring of student absentee levels helps local health departments identify disease outbreaks as they are emerging in schools and in the local community. This partnership between schools and public health allows the health department to offer guidance to schools on how to limit the spread of disease as well as provide fact sheets and letters for parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Participating in absenteeism surveillance is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between schools and the local health department, allowing for better communication and collaboration in the occurrence of a disease outbreak or other public health event

Contact Information

Please contact Stephanie Neal at syndromic@vdh.virginia.gov or (804) 864-8136 with questions or problems.

Absentee Data Overview

Participating school divisions will be asked to submit the following information for each school on each day that the school is in session: 1) the number of students enrolled and 2) the number of students absent. The data will be transmitted in aggregate form by school, and no individual-level information will be shared.

Data File Format

The order and format of the data elements within the file submitted to VDH is important, please review the file specifications below. Data files should be submitted to VDH in a comma-separate value (CSV) file.

Field	Definition	Field Type
Date	Date of Absence/enrollment	date (mm/dd/yyyy or dd-mmm-yy)
School Identifier	VDOE assigned identifier *See below	8 characters (XXX-XXXX)
Student Enrollment	Total number of students enrolled on given date	Integer
Student Absences	Total number of students absent (explained or unexplained) on given date	Integer

*School Identifier is the three digit school division number (with leading zeros as needed) followed by a dash (-) then the four digit school number (with leading zeros as needed). For example: 001-1234. Private schools without these codes must contact VDH to receive an ID number.

Data File Naming Convention

Please use the name of the school division as part of the file name. VDH recommends using an underscore between each word within the file name **School_Division_Name.csv**, see sample below. The name of file should stay the same for each file submission to VDH. Please Do NOT include a date or time stamp in the file name.

Sample File

File name

Accomack_County_Public_Schools.csv

Sample data

09/05/2017,001-0080,345,134

09/05/2017,001-0590,0,0

09/05/2017,001-0704,375,25

Explanation

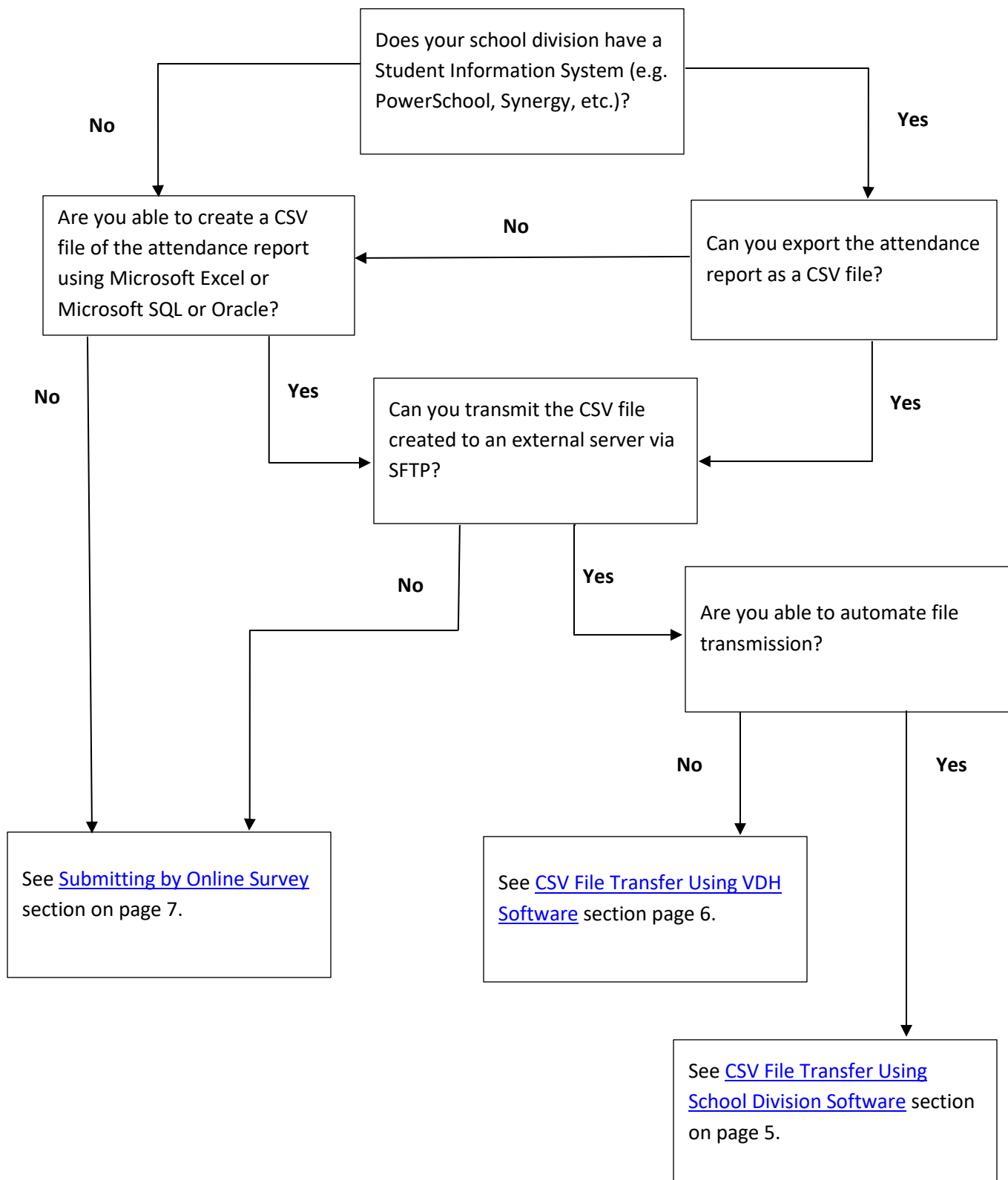
On September 5, 2017, at Elementary School A (school number 0080 in school division 001), of the 345 students enrolled, 134 were absent

On September 5, 2017, Elementary School B (school number 0590 in school division 001) was closed.

On September 5, 2017, Middle School A (school number 0704 in school division 001), 375 students were enrolled, 25 students were absent and they do not collect or report faculty absentee information.

Submitting Absentee Data to VDH

The following steps outline the process to compile and submit school absentee data to the VDH secure server using secure file transport protocol (SFTP). Submissions can be automated or accomplished manually. Please use the below flowchart to assess which method would work best for your school division.



Submitting CSV Data Files

There are two ways to compile a CSV data file with student absences:

1. **Student Information System (SIS)** - School divisions that are able to generate an attendance report from their SIS to produce data in the required format should run the report and save the output as a comma-separated value (CSV) file using the specified naming convention from page 3. Please reach out to VDH if there are problems generating the attendance report.
2. **MS Excel** - School divisions that need to create a report by recording the data by hand can use Microsoft Excel to capture the data in a comma-separated value (CSV) file. Enter the data into the StudentAbsentee_Template.csv file provided in the zip file. Remember to rename the file using the specified naming convention from page 3.

Note: Multiple days of data can be compiled into the same file by inserting the most recent day's data to next available row.

	A	B	C	D
1	Date	SchoolID	StudentEnrollment	StudentAbsences
2	09/05/2012	000-1111	314	12
3	09/05/2012	000-2222	287	15
4	09/05/2012	000-3333	298	11
5	09/05/2012	000-4444	350	17
6	09/06/2012	000-1111	314	15
7	09/06/2012	000-2222	287	11
8	09/06/2012	000-3333	298	14
9	09/06/2012	000-4444	350	18
10	09/07/2012	000-1111	314	17
11	09/07/2012	000-2222	287	10
12	09/07/2012	000-3333	298	15
13	09/07/2012	000-4444	350	21
14				

There are two ways to transfer CSV data files:

CSV File Transfer using School Division Software –

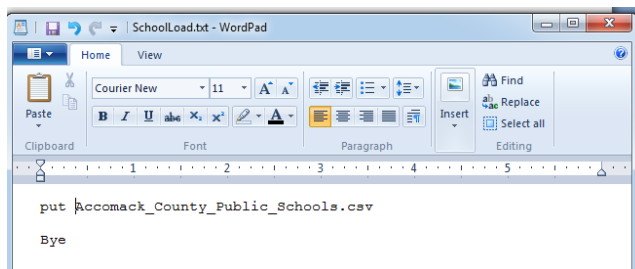
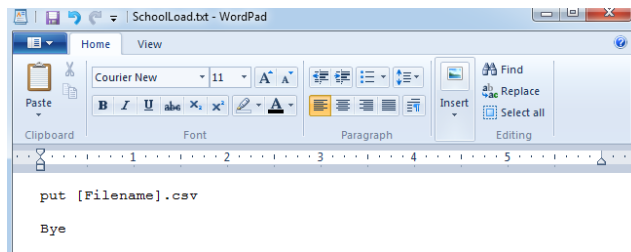
School divisions with a SIS similar to PowerSchool or Synergy and who can utilize a software like SQL Server Integration Server to schedule a job to transmit files via SFTP, please follow steps below

1. Contact Stephanie Neal at syndromic@vdh.virginia.gov to obtain access information (**Username** and **Password**) for submission to the VDH SFTP server.
2. Create a daily absentee data file following the information in the [Absentee Data Overview](#) section on pages 2-3.
3. Test your SFTP connection to **vdhsftp.vdh.virginia.gov** to ensure you can submit the daily absentee data file.
4. Schedule a job generate and submit absentee data file to VDH daily, preferably by 5pm each day.

CSV File Transfer using VDH Software-

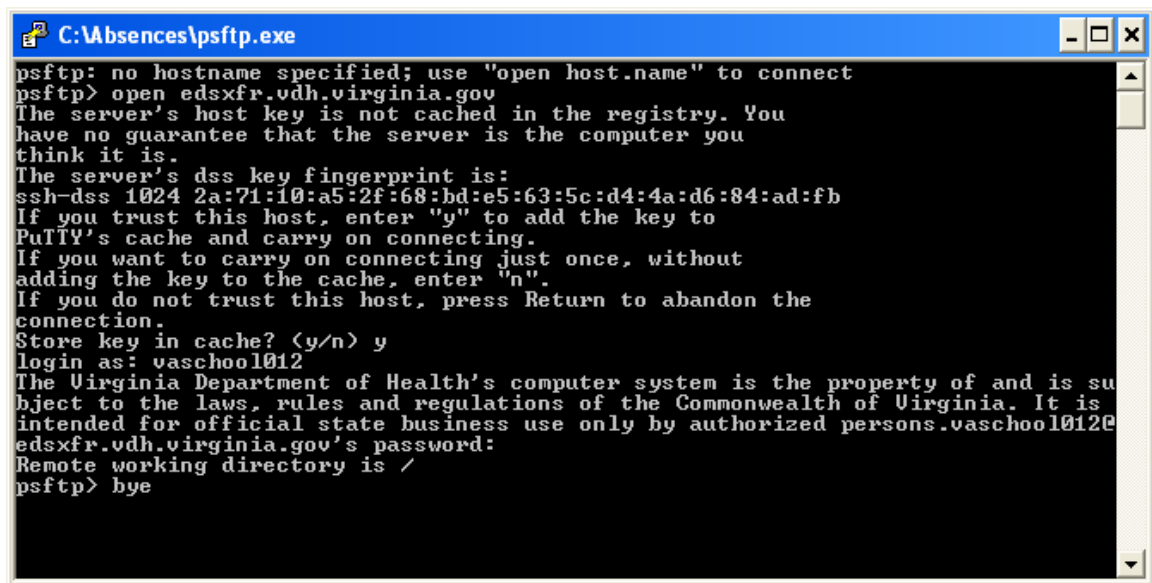
School divisions with an SIS, but are unable to transmit files with an in-house solution, please follow steps below.

1. Contact Stephanie Neal at syndromic@vdh.virginia.gov to obtain access information (**Username** and **Password**) for submission to the VDH SFTP server.
2. Download the SchoolAbsenteeData.zip file from the this website:
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/guidance-for-schools-submitting-data-to-vdh/>
3. Save the SchoolAbsenteeData folder provided in the zip file to the C: drive
(C:\SchoolAbsenteeData)
4. Save your daily School_Division_Name.csv data file in C:\SchoolAbsenteeData folder to be transmitted
For Example: Accomack_County_Public_Schools.csv.
5. Open SchoolLoad.txt file and replace [Filename] with the name of file School_Division_Name.csv file (from [Data File Naming Convention](#) on page 3). Make sure to remove the enclosing brackets []. Save the SchoolLoad.txt file. See images below for how to change the SchoolLoad.txt.



6. Click once on SchoolLoad.bat file. Then, using the right mouse button, click once again on SchoolLoad.bat, and select Edit.
7. Replace [Username] and [Password] with the access information obtained from Step 1 above. Save the document.
8. Double click on the psftp.exe file in the C:\SchoolAbsenteeData folder to open it.
9. Type *open vdhftp.vdh.virginia.gov* and press enter.
10. If prompted to 'Store Key in Cache', Type Y and press enter.
11. Type **Username** obtained in Step 1 and press enter.

12. Type **Password** obtained in Step 1 and press enter. **Password will not show up on screen as you are typing it.**
13. Type *bye* to close window. See example below.



```
C:\Absences\psftp.exe
psftp: no hostname specified; use "open host.name" to connect
psftp> open edsxfr.vdh.virginia.gov
The server's host key is not cached in the registry. You
have no guarantee that the server is the computer you
think it is.
The server's dss key fingerprint is:
ssh-dss 1024 2a:71:10:a5:2f:68:bd:e5:63:5c:d4:4a:d6:84:ad:fb
If you trust this host, enter "y" to add the key to
PuTTY's cache and carry on connecting.
If you want to carry on connecting just once, without
adding the key to the cache, enter "n".
If you do not trust this host, press Return to abandon the
connection.
Store key in cache? (y/n) y
login as: vaschool012
The Virginia Department of Health's computer system is the property of and is su
bject to the laws, rules and regulations of the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is
intended for official state business use only by authorized persons.vaschool012@
edsxfr.vdh.virginia.gov's password:
Remote working directory is /
psftp> bye
```

14. Schedule job to run the batch file SchoolLoad.bat daily to transmit the CSV file to VDH, preferably by 5pm or run the batch file SchoolLoad.bat manually.

Submitting by Online Survey

School divisions not able to generate a CSV report from their school information system will be able to submit data using a secure online survey (REDCap). See steps below.

1. Please use the following REDCap survey link to submit absentee data. The survey can be completed centrally for each school in the school division or distributed to an individual at each school.

Survey Link: <https://redcap.vdh.virginia.gov/redcap/surveys/?s=C9DAM3Y9T4>

2. Fill out the survey provided in the above link each day, preferably by 5pm. Please note that you will need to fill out the information for each school separately.
3. Confirm that the "Absentee Date" matches the date of the absences you are reporting before clicking "Submit".

Absentee Reporting Log

The Virginia Department of Health is requesting assistance from public schools in providing student absentee data to support public health response efforts for coronavirus disease COVID-19.

Please use the form below to submit daily student attendance for a single school. A separate form will be required for each school in your division. Please enter the total number of students that are absent for any reason, regardless if it was an excused or unexcused absence.

If possible, please complete this form by 5pm EST each day a school is in session. For any questions or issues, please contact syndromic@vdh.virginia.gov.

1) Absentee Date

* must provide value

  Today M-D-Y

2) Select School Name

* must provide value

 ▼

3) Total Number of Students Enrolled

* must provide value

Enter a number only

4) Total Number of Students Absent (Excused and Unexcused)

* must provide value

Enter a number only. If no students are absent enter 0.

Submit